

Washington, DC – Congressman Harry Teague announced that, starting today, Medicare will begin mailing thousands of seniors in New Mexico a \$250 ‘donut hole’ rebate check. Seniors who fall into the ‘donut hole’ gap in Medicare’s prescription drug coverage will receive a one-time tax-free \$250 rebate check to off-set the cost of prescription drugs. These checks will be mailed over the next few months – as seniors enter their coverage gap periods.

“Life saving prescription drugs cost many New Mexico seniors thousands of dollars each year,” said Teague. “These checks will help close the Medicare ‘donut hole’, so that our seniors no longer have to choose between their prescription drugs and putting food on the table.”

The ‘donut hole’ refers to the a coverage gap that occurs when a senior participating in the Medicare Prescription Drug Program reaches the point where their prescription drug costs exceed \$2,830. At that point, the senior must pay 100% of the cost of their drugs until they hit the catastrophic coverage threshold.

The “donut hole” checks are the first in a series of reforms of the Medicare Prescription Drug program. In 2011, seniors in the donut hole will receive a 50% discount on brand name drugs and by 2020, the donut hole will be closed.

Last year, roughly 25,000 Medicare beneficiaries in New Mexico fell in the “donut hole” and

received no extra help to defray the cost of their prescription drugs.

Medicare recipients don’t have to do anything to get the \$250 check – once their drug costs for the year hit \$2,830 the one-time check will be issued automatically.

Harry Teague is also warning New Mexico seniors to be on the lookout for criminals who see this as an opportunity to scam seniors out of their rebate checks.

“While these checks will do a lot of good, some people out there will see this as an opportunity to prey on seniors. That’s why it’s important to be on the lookout for Medicare scams,” said Congressman Harry Teague. “You do not need to share your social security number or Medicare Information to receive your check. If you have any questions or receive a suspicious request, please contact your local Medicare or Attorney General’s office.”